

BRITZ OF HEADQUARTERS

By MARCIN BARBER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with a scream from Dorothy March in the opera box of Mrs. Missioner, a wealthy widow. It is a scream of terror when Mrs. Missioner's necklace breaks, scattering the diamonds all over the floor. Curtis Griswold and Bruton Sands, society men in love with Mrs. Missioner, gather up the gems. Griswold, who is what is supposed to be the celebrated Maharajah and craves it. A Hindu declares it was not the genuine. An expert later pronounces all the stones substitutes for the original. One of the missing diamonds is found in the room of Elinor Holcomb, confidential companion of Mrs. Missioner. She is arrested, notwithstanding Mrs. Missioner's belief in her innocence. Meanwhile, in an uptown mansion, two Hindoos, who are in quest to recover the Maharajah, discuss the arrest. Detective Britz takes up the case. He asks the co-operation of Mr. Fitch, Elinor's fiance, in running down the real criminal. Britz learns that duplicates of Mrs. Missioner's diamonds were made in Paris on the order of Elinor Holcomb. While walking Britz is seized, bound and gagged by Hindoos. He is imprisoned in a deserted house, but makes his escape. Britz discovers an insane diamond expert whom he believes was employed by either Sands or Griswold to make counterfeit of the Missioner's gems. Griswold intimates that Sands is on the verge of failure. Two Hindoos burglarize the home of Sands and are captured by Britz. One of them finds a note signed by "Millicent" and addressed to "Britz." Britz locates a woman named Millicent Delaroché, to whom Griswold has been paying marked attention. She lives in a small hall at Mrs. Missioner's home, but learns nothing further about the diamonds.

CHAPTER XXI.

Stop, Thief!

Millicent Delaroché slept soundly. Here was the type of beauty that retains its freshness through indulgence in creature comforts. Not all her fondness for amusement could lead her to rob herself for many nights of the repose she instinctively knew was essential to the preservation of her charms. She was the sort of woman, past thirty, who retains a false youth sometimes more effective than the immaturity which is measured by the calendar. Her complexion was as delicate as a substitute's. Her eyes were brighter than those of the average athletic young woman, and no silver thread shot the dusk of her luxuriant hair. All this was due largely, she was convinced, to her lifelong habit of sleeping early and often, and of resolutely refusing to let her slumber be disturbed by any such useless things as dreams, which, after all, are mere ghosts of thought—and too much thinking was not one of her follies.

Though Mrs. Delaroché slept profoundly, her external senses were not wholly unvigilant. Long study of herself had made her sensitive to disagreeable impressions that were purely corporeal; and so, though no intrusive vision of mind could interrupt the fluid calm of her beauty sleep, a slightly uncomfortable sensation, or a precise spot whence her treasure swept upward in an elaborate cuff, or parted in the braids of negligee had the effect of arousing her as no mere dream possibly could have done. It required not many seconds, allowing for the habits of her mind, and the fact that she suddenly was recalled from deep repose, for Mrs. Delaroché to realize there was a hand beneath her pillow, and that hand was not one of her own. Rigid with fright, she waited an instant to assure herself she had not committed the innovation of dreaming, then she made a swift reach for the alien hand—too late. It had been withdrawn swiftly in the few moments requisite to complete comprehension of the situation, and if Mrs. Delaroché had not been so certain that she never dreamed, she might have thought she still was sleeping. Hasty exploration of the space beneath her pillow, however, told her the midnight hand had not gone away empty. Realizing that, she was broad awake in an instant. She sat erect so swiftly that she brushed her forehead slightly against something cold and hard and round and smooth that was immediately pressed menacingly to her head.

"Don't move, or you'll get this!" said a rough voice.

Mrs. Delaroché gasped, and despite the hand, sank back again to her pillow. She could still feel, however, or fancied she could, the icy rim of the metal that had touched her brow. This was a great feat of imagination for Mrs. Delaroché.

"That's right; he still!" continued the voice. "If you know what's good for you."

Rough though the voice was, it was carefully subdued. It could not have been heard in the corridor. Mrs. Delaroché drew a deep, fluttering breath, and was evidently on the point of making another attempt to speak when the metallic ring touched her forehead again, chilling her to silence, and the voice went on:

"See here, lady, I've got no time to waste with you. Just you stay where you are, and don't make a sound, unless you want to get this!" and the metal was pressed a little harder to her forehead. "I am going to get out of this room quietly, and I'm going right now. If you make any noise for the next five minutes, I'll blow your head off!"

The cold pressure was removed from her forehead, and the burglar moved about the room. The thick carpet and doubtless the felt soles on the man's feet as auxiliaries, made his steps soundless. He went from her dressing table to a writing desk, lighting each in turn with a vivid circle of rays from an electric pocket torch,

but holding the illuminating device always in such position that no faintest gleam fell upon himself. Not for a moment, however, did he slacken his alertness sufficiently for Mrs. Delaroché to have a good chance to get to the inner room. He pretended to search thoroughly several places where money or jewels might be kept, but, even to a woman of her slow wit, it was apparent he did so in a half-hearted way. Millicent felt assured the man knew just what he had taken from beneath her pillow, and that he was satisfied with it. He showed that to be true when he gave up the pretended search without so much as trying the handle of a small safe in a far corner of the room. Returning to the bedside, he renewed his warning, throwing so much savage meaning into his words that Mrs. Delaroché was certain there was no pretense about it.

Then he walked to the door giving on the corridor, turned the handle cautiously, thrust his head through a second opening, and looked up and down the hall. Evidently reassured, he opened the door, stepped outside, and closed it swiftly and silently. There was not a sound to indicate whether he had gone along the corridor, or still stood just outside the door. Mrs. Delaroché waited, listening intently in the hope of hearing his footsteps, but she listened vainly. She waited perhaps a minute, for she had no desire to hazard a shot from that terrible thing the burglar had pressed against her brow. Then her courage failed, and she bounded to the door, screaming with all her might, pausing only long enough to snatch a peignoir and throw it about her shoulders as she pulled open the outer door of her suite and sent her shrieks shrieking down the long hall. Her cries, for she was a magnificently constructed animal of most expansive lung power, not only echoed far along the corridor, but penetrated even the sound-proof doors of the other apartments. The disturbance she made was alarmingly novel to the exclusive calm of the Hotel Renaissance. Doors were flung open, heads popped out, and a dozen inquiries were flung at her from as many parts of the hall; but Mrs. Delaroché had exhausted her coherence in framing that one purpose of screaming with all her might until some man of action should speed to her assistance. She did not waste any strength in articulation. She simply screamed, and so eloquent were her shrieks that although she uttered no concrete word, only a few of them were needed to tell the more intelligent of her auditors that she had been robbed, and that what she had lost was of priceless value to her.

Before the fusillade of her cries died away in a scattering fire of gasping sobs, half a dozen pajamaed specters were racing down the corridor in the direction they deemed the burglar had taken. What account they would have given of themselves had they come up with the fugitive is conjectural. They were spared the disagreeable necessity of submitting their courage to that test, for as the burglar turned a corner of the hall many yards in advance of his pursuers, he was followed by a foot adroitly interpolated in his path, and when he recovered his breath after a jarring fall, it was to find two men of sturdy build sitting upon him as composedly as if nature had planned him for a conversation chair. The pistol he had carried in his hands throughout the pursuit was snatched from his grasp, and although he struggled furiously, his arms were dragged behind his back and handcuffs were snapped upon his wrists. Then he was dragged to his feet by four insistent arms and impelled with much vigor along the hallway in the reverse direction to that which he had followed.

Unmistakable was the rejoicing of the pajama squad at the sight of his captivity. Undeniably heroic was its surge toward him. Faces grim with postscript bravery were thrust into the prisoner's face, and voices ranging from mockery to indignation bombarded him with questions. All of which the prisoner met with sullen silence and with looks that made the squad retreat a pace or two in spite of the firmness with which his captors held him. Mrs. Delaroché's fading screams guided the little group to her apartment, where the hands of ministering angels had adjusted her peignoir to its normal position upon her Junoesque form and fastened its fluttering ribbons in becoming bows. She there received the heroes of the man hunt with astonishing composure.

"Is this the man who robbed you, madam?" asked one of the men who had caught the burglar. He was the house detective. "Stand behind him, Jim," he said to his colleague, a porter with the fullback's shoulders.

"It must be," said Mrs. Delaroché, "but I cannot tell by his face. I did not see it. It looks like the man, though. Make him speak."

But that task was beyond the house detective's powers. Irresponsible though his mind might be as compared with the city's sleuths and bluecoats, he hardly felt justified in employing the most medieval forms of torture to accomplish that purpose. Seemingly, nothing short of the boot, the thumbcrew and the Iron Maiden



She Was Broad Awake in an Instant.

would drag a word from the captive. He maintained his sullen silence, although it might be said he broke it in a way, for the furious looks he cast at the pajama squad were almost audible. Those looks caused several of the squad's doughty heroes suddenly to realize the unconventionality of their attire, and to send them precipitously in search of dressing gowns. One or two of them remained, however, and the house detective, who, in hotels as frostily patrician as the Renaissance, did not often have an opportunity to hold the center of the stage, was fairly well content with his audience.

"Now, then, you!" he said, brusquely addressing the prisoner, "speak up. What were you doing here?"

"He got my jewels!" cried Mrs. Delaroché.

The prisoner turned one of his sullen looks upon her, but, conscious that she was robbed as daintily as the most fastidious society actress in the Du Barry of bedroom scenes could be, her equanimity was not so vulnerable as that of the deserters from the pajama squad.

"He took the whole case of jewels from under my pillow," she continued, addressing the house detective. "They must be in his possession still, unless he dropped them while he was running away."

"We will soon find out," said the leading man. "Jim, go through him!"

Jim shrugged those fullback shoulders when the burglar attempted to petrify him with a look, and his search through the prisoner's pockets was thorough. Mrs. Delaroché gasped her delight when from the captive's coat the porter drew forth a heavy silver casket, and held it toward her.

"Is that your property, madam?" asked the house detective.

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Delaroché, eagerly.

erily. "Oh, dear, I am so glad he did not escape with it. What would—"

She checked herself hastily.

"You must come to me in the morning, Mr.—Mr.—for a reward," she added in tones so sweetly suggestive of a golden guerdon that the detective's eyes glistened.

"Thank you, madam, that is not necessary," he replied, perfunctorily. "Let's see what else this fellow has got."

He and the porter explored the captive's pockets further, but found nothing more in the way of loot. Mrs. Delaroché looked hastily through her desk and dressing table and told the man apparently nothing else was missing.

"Then," said the house detective, "I guess there is nothing else for us to do but to turn this burglar over to the police. May we use your telephone, madam?"

Mrs. Delaroché gladly nodded assent, and the sleuth continued:

"Jim, call up Headquarters, and have a couple of men sent here to take this fellow away."

The effect of that command upon the prisoner startled everyone. Not only did it cause him to break his sullen silence, but it drew from him words that made the house detective involuntarily loose his hold on the man and step back, staring. Jim's jaw fell, and Mrs. Delaroché gazed at the fellow, wide-eyed.

"I can save you that trouble," said the burglar. "You need not telephone for the Central Office men. I am Lieutenant Detective Britz of Headquarters. And these," he nodded toward the silver casket, "are the missing Missioner diamonds that were stolen from the richest woman in America."

"Turning to Mrs. Delaroché abruptly, he said:

"Madam, how do you come to be in possession of these jewels?"

All the panting loveliness of Mrs. Delaroché shivered as the sharp question came. It was now her turn to be silent. She looked at the Headquarters man as if he held in his hand her life, liberty, and whatever chance remained to her of happiness. A gleam of appeal glowed in her beautiful eyes for a moment. Plainly, if she did not speak it was not for lack of will. Her words were as frozen as the normal condition of her thoughts. She put her hands to her breast and gazed at the Central Office man as pitiously as a woman of her Junoesque charms could be expected to do. The ingenu role was impossible to Mrs. Delaroché; but had it not been so, undoubtedly she would have assumed it in this emergency.

"Answer me, madam; this calls for an immediate explanation. You told this man these jewels belonged to you. How does it come you have the diamonds everybody in New York knows as the Maharajah necklace of Mrs. Doris Missioner?"

Mrs. Delaroché still struggled faintly for speech. Her lids quivered; her eyes alternately closed and then were fixed upon the detective, and a tremor, beginning at the crown of her adorable head, moved in waves to her perfect feet. She sank into a chair and let her head fall upon her arms as they stretched inertly across a little table.

There was no smallest streak of pity in the look Detective Britz best upon her. He had dealt with women of her type before many times, he told himself, and now that he was so near the heart of the great Missioner mystery, it was not his purpose to be influenced in the slightest degree by the distress of a Diana, to say nothing of an Aphrodite. Dry sobs choked the woman.

Her eyes strained at their tendons so painfully that tears would have been a divine relief. Whether she was grieved or frightened was not so apparent as that she was sorely distressed. Minutes passed before she lifted her face and once more looked at the detective.

The house sleuth and his porter had retreated a yard or more, and the erstwhile pajama squad, now an as-fused force of Cossacks and Bedouins in a varied array of dressing gowns and bathrobes, looked and listened in hushed expectancy.

"Come, Mrs. Delaroché," said Britz, sternly. "You really must not waste any more of my time. I have spent an hour in getting these jewels away from you, and I don't intend to put in many more words in getting the facts from you. You have got to answer soon or late, and you may as well do it at once."

If there was to be any third degree in her case, the detective was determined to apply it then and there.

"They were given to me," said the woman faintly.

"By whom?"

"By a friend of mine," she replied.

"And his name?" inquired the detective curtly.

"I do not care to tell his name," said Mrs. Delaroché, who had recovered a little of her calmness.

"You must tell it," Britz insisted.

"I cannot," she said.

"But I tell you you must!" returned the detective. "Don't you see you have got to tell it to square yourself?"

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked with a pretty show of indignation.

"Now, don't try any of those games on me," said Britz. In his impatience, he was descending close to the methods of Donnelly and Carson. He remembered that in a moment and resumed more persuasively:

"It will save you a great deal of trouble for you, Mrs. Delaroché, if you tell me the truth, and tell it at once, without holding anything back. You understand, I am a detective from Police Headquarters, and I was assigned weeks ago to find Mrs. Missioner's diamonds. I have found the diamonds, and now I must find the thief."

Mrs. Delaroché shivered, and started slowly to her feet. She turned a disdainful glance on the group at the door, then faced Britz once more, and in a voice little more than a whisper, she said:

"Whatever you may think, I did not know the jewels were stolen. I did not know they ever belonged to Mrs. Missioner. I never heard of Mrs. Missioner before tonight, except through the papers. I did not know that any of my acquaintances knew her. I was not aware she had lost her diamonds. What you tell me about the theft of a necklace from Mrs. Missioner is entirely new to me. I seldom read the papers, and when I do, I do not read accounts of crime."

"All you say may be true," Britz persisted, "but you may take my word for it—the jewels are Mrs. Missioner's; they were stolen from her, and you must tell me the name of the person who gave them to you."

The beautiful woman's distress at this time was so sincere that the Headquarters man involuntarily dealt more gently with her. He urged her to be seated again, and then for the first time apparently remembered his hands still were gripped by the bands of steel the house detective had snapped upon them.

"Madam, I must insist once more

that you tell me the man's name," Britz said.

"His name?" she returned wonderingly.

"It is Curtis Griswold, isn't it?" said the Headquarters man incisively.

Mrs. Delaroché, with a little cry which showed more emotion than anyone would expect from so self-centered a woman, sprang to her feet and advanced toward Britz with hands outstretched in protest.

"You don't mean to say that you believe Mr. Griswold to be a thief?" she exclaimed.

"We shall see, madam," rejoined Britz, "how successful he has been in at least one robbery."

"Inside this little casket," he said, "are jewels worth more than half a million dollars. Please let me have the key to this jewel box."

Reluctantly, she unfasted a slender gold chain that hung about her neck, from which depended a tiny silver key. Britz fitted it into the lock and turned the bolt. Triumphant, he seized the lid, and as everyone else in the room focused eager eyes upon the silver box, Britz opened it; then dropped it on the table with a furious exclamation.

The box was empty!

CHAPTER XXII.

Hot on the Scent.

Britz bounded into the inner room and made a quick examination of every window. He found marks on one of the casements that told his practiced eye entry to the apartment had been made through the window by some one skilled in daring burglary. It gave on the fire escape. Britz flung up the sash and looked out. As he expected, there was a long stage of ladders and balconies that ended on a story above the street. The fire escape was at the least frequented end of the big hotel, and an awning threw a shadow from an arc lamp on the globe big enough to afford opportunity for an agile man to mount on the shoulders of comrades, grasp the second-story window and swing himself up unseen. He let his eyes fall on the balcony one story below the window. On it lay something yellow, crumpled as if dropped inadvertently. Britz ran down the ladder and returned to the room with the object. It was an Oriental handkerchief such as he had seen in the Swami's possession.

It was perfectly plain to Britz that the Hindoos had been beforehand with him in recovering the Missioner jewels. By this time he knew enough to be certain that their object in getting possession of the gems was even stronger than the professional pride that had actuated him to recover them for their owner. He was aware they had a reason yet to be explained why they were in such a desperate hurry to take the stones of the necklace, or at least one of them—the Maharajah—to India. Even now they might be aboard a vessel that would put to sea in a few hours, leaving no trace of their departure. Or, it might be they were beyond the city limits on their way to another port of exit. He must stop them at all hazards. He leaped to the telephone, called Police Headquarters, and called Mr. Manning on the wire, and asked the Chief to give personal attention to the request he was about to make.

"Notify all precincts," said Britz, "to stop every man of Oriental appearance attempting to leave the city by boat or train. Have all the ferries watched, and send a double detail to the Grand Central Station. Telephone the Associated Press for a list of the vessels about to sail today; have the water front watched for tramp steamers, and don't forget the small craft, both sail and steam."

"Have you found the jewels?" asked Manning, at the other end of the wire.

"No!" roared Britz, "but I will have them in a few hours, if you'll make the bunch hustle to help me. Will you attend to all this yourself, Chief?"

Britz found Doctor Fitch waiting for him on the sidewalk, as he had arranged before entering the apartment of Mrs. Delaroché, in the guise of a burglar, and in a single word told the physician how he had been balked in the chief object of his nocturnal visit.

"Quick! the word now, doc!" said Britz.

"Where are you going?" asked Fitch.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Stirring the Melting Pot.

What is believed to be the first attempt by an agricultural college to teach immigrants coming to this country, is said to give every promise of success. Ninety-five Polish farmers from the Connecticut Valley, southern New Hampshire and northern Connecticut, gathered at the Massachusetts Agricultural college to be instructed in agriculture and good citizenship. The lectures were interpreted by K. J. Wolski of Holyoke.

George Chapman of the department of botany told these men of the necessity of getting good onion seed, this being one of the most important crops of the valley. He also showed the water and wind blast method of selecting the poor from the good seeds.

—Christian Science Monitor.

Infalible guide for a baby's bath. What felt comfortable to the elbow felt comfortable to baby. But alas, elbow sleeves have impaired the usefulness of that natural thermometer. That elbow test can be relied on now days only when you find an elbow that never sheds its long sleeves."

Went for the Same Reason.

"What makes the crowd gather so over there?"

"Oh, vulgar curiosity. Let's go over.—From the Silent Partner.

GOT THE LETTERS MIXED

Clergyman's Mistake Resulted in Giving Decided Surprise to Dignified Archbishop.

One of the most amusing stories which the Hon. Lionel A. Tollemache tells in "Nuts and Chestnuts," is that entitled, "The Wrong Envelope." Mr. M—, a missionary, shortly before leaving England, received two letters—one from Archbishop Tait asking him to dine, and the other from the secretary of a religious society, a very old friend, asking him to preach. He accepted the archbishop's invitation, and at the same time wrote to the secretary, but put the letters into the wrong envelopes.

After the dinner at Lambeth the archbishop said to him: "Mr. M—, do you always answer your dinner invitations in the same way?"

"I do not understand, your Grace."

The letter, which was then shown to the missionary, ran thus: "You old rascal! Why did you not ask me before? You know perfectly well that I shall be on the high seas on the date you name."—London Tit-Bits.

Resigned.

The sick man had called his lawyer. "I wish to explain again to you," said he weakly, "about willing my property."

The attorney held up his hand reassuringly. "There, there," said he, "leave that all to me."

The sick man sighed resignedly. "I suppose I might as well," said he, turning upon his pillow. "You'll get it, anyway."

IT IS CRIMINAL TO NEGLECT THE SKIN AND HAIR

Think of the suffering entailed by neglected skin troubles—mentally because of disfigurement, physically because of pain. Think of the pleasure of a clear skin, soft, white hands, and good hair. These blessings, so essential to happiness and even success in life, are often only a matter of a little thoughtful care in the selection of effective remedial agents. Cuticura Soap and Ointment do so much for poor complexioned, red, rough hands, and dry, thin and falling hair, and cost so little, that it is almost criminal not to use them. Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold everywhere, a postal to "Cuticura," Dept. 21 L, Boston, will secure a liberal sample of each, with 32-page booklet on skin and scalp treatment.

Wanted—A Handhold.

Misleading Mike heaved such a deep sigh that his companion was moved to ask him what the matter was:

"I was just thinking about bad roads and the wonders of science," was the answer. "This earth is spinning round faster than a railway train behind time."

"Well, we ain't fell off yet."

"No. But think of what a convenience it would be if we could have some place to grab on to while the territory slid under our feet until the place we wanted to go to came along."

—Youth's Companion.

By Way of Excuse.

"Youngleigh has some singular ideas."

"What, for instance?"

"Well, he says it is mean to profit by other people's experience after they've been at all the trouble and expense of collecting it."

Particular Woman.

"She insisted on having a woman lawyer secure her divorce."

"Why was she so particular?"

"She did not want to go contrary to that portion of the marriage ceremony that reads, 'Let no man put asunder.'—Judge.

Important to Mothers.

Examine carefully every bottle of CASTORIA, a safe and sure remedy for infants and children, and see that it bears the Signature of J. C. FLETCHER.

In Use For Over 30 Years.

Children Cry for Fletcher's Castoria.

Decidedly Novel.

Ellis—It was a novel proposal.

Stella—What did he say?

Ellis—That he begged the proud privilege of getting up mornings to build the fire for me.

Above Him.

"You say that she married beneath her?"

"She certainly did; her father was an aviator and her husband a chauffeur."

The Paradox.

"My doctor is a paradoxical one."

"How so?"

"The more he reduced the swelling the higher the bills grew."

It's humiliating to discover that the folks who we imagine despise us never even think of us!

Ten smiles for a nickel. Always buy Red Cross Bag Blue; have beautiful clear white clothes.

The fellow who goes around looking for trouble generally meets somebody who takes him at his word.

Mrs. Whallow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, etc. It is a bottle.

A man arrested for vagrancy naturally has a pinched look.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

Cures all blood humors, all eruptions, clears the complexion, creates an appetite, aids digestion, relieves that tired feeling, gives vigor and vim.

Get it today in usual liquid form or chocolate tablets called Sarsatabs.

Potter's Eye Salve FOR ALL SORE EYES

Jane Had Change of Heart

Telephoned for the Police to Arrest Little Willie Jones and Then Repented.

If Jane were 25 instead of 5 she would perhaps suspect that it was admiration on the part of Willie Jones, who has of late singled her out for court-pulling, cap-snatching and other boyish methods of teasing. At any rate, Jane considers that her dignity

has been "put upon" and her peace of mind destroyed.

"Do that again, Willie Jones," she muttered, "and I'll have you arrested!"

And Willie Jones did it again.

Jane marched into the house, took down the telephone receiver and demanded: "Give me the police station." As no grown-up was present to toll this drastic measure, the con-

nection was secured, and then Jane said in a firm voice: "Please send an officer up here to 176 — avenue to arrest a young gentleman. Hurry, please."

Jane's family were amazed when a policeman presented himself to carry out his duty. Several other officers were soon called in to help locate the criminal, and there was much excitement for some half hour around No. 176 — avenue.

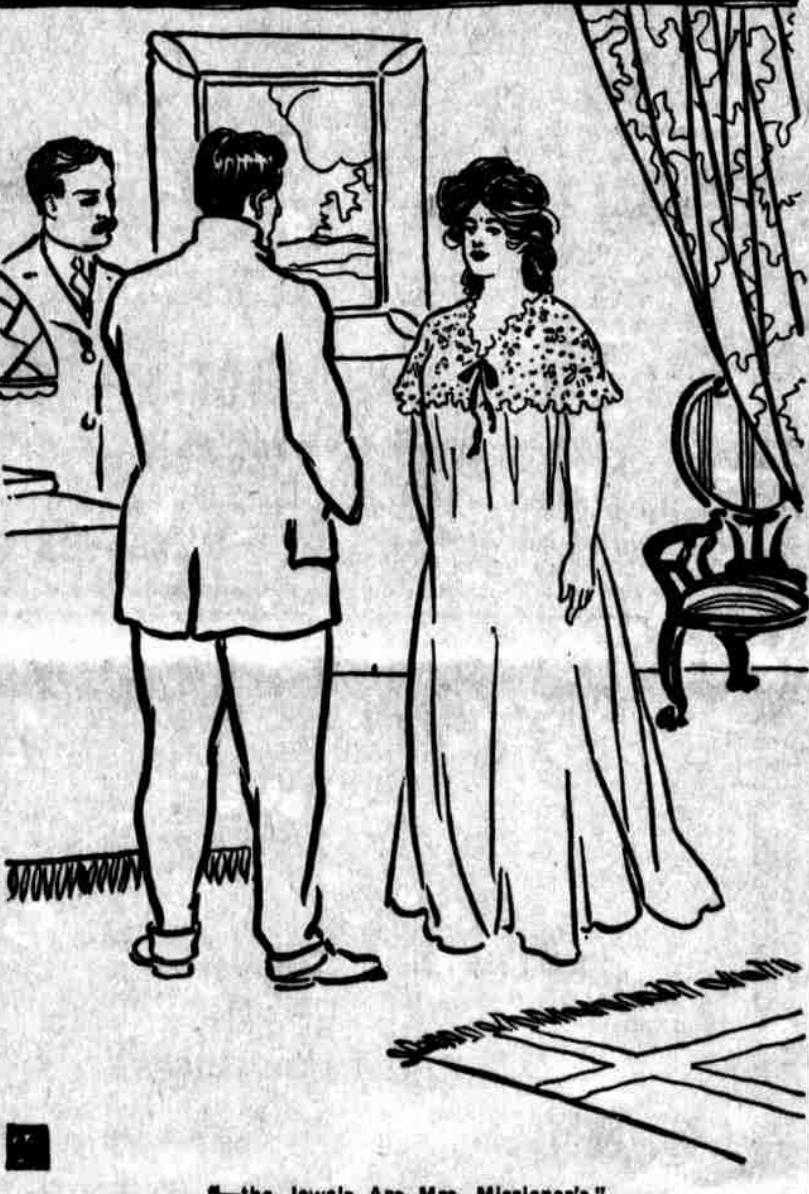
It was finally thought that the officers' services would be needed in a

hunt for Jane, who had mysteriously disappeared, but when Uncle Wilson went to get his overcoat from the hall closet, Jane was dragged forth, a very frightened little girl at the wheels of law had set revolving.

"I guess I don't want Willie Jones sent to prison, after all!" she explained.

Tough Elbows.

At a time of the day when nobody was at home in a New York tenement except women and babies search was



—the Jewels Are Mrs. Missioner's.